

Love hath his fry dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte,
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye;
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce.
And with that word he fil down in a trauunce
A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.
This Palamoun, that thoughte that

thurgh his herte
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
for ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
And seide, Arcite, false traytour wikke!
Now artow hent, that lovest my lady so,
for whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have seyde thee heer biforn,
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus;
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,
for I am Palamon, thy mortal foe;
And though that I no wepne have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght, that outhur thou shalt dye,
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
Chees which thou wolt or thou shalt nat asterte!

Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,
And seyde thus, By God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond;
for I defye the seurete and the bond
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is fre,
And I wol love hire mawgree al thy myght.
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght,
And wilnest to darreine hire by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe, tomorwe I wol nat faile,
Withoute wityng of any oother wight,
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee
And chese the beste and leve the worste for me;
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;
And if so be that thou my lady wynne
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
Thou mayst wel have thy lady as for me.

This Palamon answerde, I graunte it thee.
And thus they been departed til amowre,
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

CAPIDE, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe

Wol noght, hir thanks, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreine
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne;
And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al the harneys hym biforn,
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
To chaungen gan the colour in hir face,
Right as the hunter in the regne of Trace,
That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the leoun or the bere,
And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
And thynketh: Heere cometh my mortal enemy,
Withoute faile he moot be deed or I;
for outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,
Or he moot sleen me if that me myshappe.
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.
Ther nas no Good day, ne no saluyng,
But streight withouten word or rehersyng
Everich of hem helpe for to armen oother,
As frendly as he were his owene brother;
And after that, with sharpe speres stronge,
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun,
In his fightyng were as a wood leoun,
And as a cruel tigre was Arcite:
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frothen whit as foom for ire wood,
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.
And in this wise I lette hem fightyng dwelle,
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.

He Destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn;
So strong it is that though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
Yet sometyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere,
for certainly oure appetites heere,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
That for to huntun is so desirus,
And namely at the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunte and horne, and houndes hym bisyde,
for in his huntynge hath he swich delit,
That it is al his joye and appetit
To been hymself the grete hertes bane,
for after Mars he serveth now Dyane.

LEER was the day, as I have toold er this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,
And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
On huntynge be they riden roially;
And to the grove that stood ful faste by,

In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
Duc Theseus the streight wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
for thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duc wol han a cours at hym or tweye
With houndes, swiche as that hym list comaunde.
And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon,
he was war of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bores two.
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
So hidously, that with the leeste strook
It semed as it wolde felle an ook;
But what they were, nothing he ne woot.
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
And pulled out a swerd, and cride, Hoo!
Namoore, up peyne of lesyng of youre heed.
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen!
But telleth me what myster men ye been,
That been so hardy for to fighten heere
Withoute juge or oother officere,
As it were in a lystes roially?

This Palamon answerde hastily
And seyde, Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deeth diserved bothe two.
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,
But sle me first, for seinte charitee,
And sle my felawe eek as wel as me;
Or sle hym first; for, though thou knowest it lite,
This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
for which he hath deserved to be deed;
for this is he that cam unto thy gate
And seyde that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast makid hym thy chief squier;
And this is he that loveth Emelye;
for sith the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun,
That I am thilke woful Palamoun,
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foe, and it am I
That loveth so hoot Emelye the brighte,
That I wol dye present in hir sighte.
Therefore I axe deeth and my juwise;
But sle my felawe in the same wise,
for bothe han we deserved to be slayn.

This worthy duc answerde anon agayn,
And seyde, This is a short conclusioun:
Your owene mouth, by youre confessioun,
hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde,
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,
Ye shal be deed by myghty Mars the rede!
The quene anon, for verray wommanhede,
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,
And alle the ladies in the compaignye.
Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,

That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle;
for gentil men they were, of greet estaat,
And nothing but for love was this debaat,
And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore;
And alle crieden, bothe lasse and moore,
Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood,
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood;
for pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
he hath considered shortly in a clause
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause;
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused,
And thus he thoughte wel, that every man
Wol helpe hymself in love if that he kan,
And eek delivere hymself out of prisoun;
And eek his herte hadde compassioun
Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon;
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And soft unto hymself he seyde, fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leoun bothe in word and dede
To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud despitous man
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in swich cas kan no divisoun,
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon.
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
he gan to looken up with eyen lighte,
And spak thise same wordes, al on highte.

How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
Ayeins his myght ther gayneth none
obstacles,
He may be cleped a god for his myracles,
for he kan maken, at his owene gyse,
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.
Lo heere this Arcite, and this Palamoun,
That quytly weren out of my prisoun,
And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my myght also,
And yet hath love, mawgree hir eyen two,
Ybrought hem hyder, bothe for to dye.
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may nat been a fole, but if he love?
Bihold, for Goddes sake that sit above,
Se how they blede! be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed
hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse:
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle.
But this is yet the beste game of alle,
That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
Kan hem therfore as muche thank as me.
She woot namoore of al this hoot fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow of an hare.
But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold,
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,